

DEATH OF JOSEPH SABIN

SKETCH OF THE DISTINGUISHED BIBLIOPHILE'S CAREER.

HIS EARLY RELATIONS WITH DEAN STANLEY AND BISHOP WILBERFORCE—SOME OF THE SERVICES HE HAS RENDERED TO STUDENTS.

Mr. Joseph Sabin, one of the best-known bibliophiles in this country, died at his residence, No. 3 Weirfield-avenue, Brooklyn, at 8:50 o'clock last night. He was surrounded by the members of his family, consisting of his wife, a lady of 63 years, four sons, and two daughters, one of whom is the wife of Mr. George L. Briggs. Mr. Sabin's death was due to uræmia and Bright's disease, from the effects of which he was first confined to his bed about three weeks ago. He lay in a state of coma most of the time for more than a week, rallying occasionally, but not sufficiently to clearly comprehend what was said to him.

Mr. Sabin was born at Braunstown, Yorkshire, England, in December, 1821. He received a common school education in Oxford, and in 1833, when 14 years of age, was apprenticed to learn the book-binding business in the store of Charles Richards, a prominent book-seller of Oxford. The indenture was for seven years, and the young man began to apply himself to the study of his business with assiduity. He was allowed to continue at the book-binding trade for but a short time, however. He was an ardent lover of books, even at this early age, and his employer soon saw that he could make him more useful in his sales-room than in the bindery, and the result was that after a few months he was transferred to the store and made a salesman. In this position his desire to be constantly consulting old and rare books was gratified, and he soon became such an expert in matters relating to books and prints that he was almost invaluable to Mr. Richards. After serving for three years as an assistant salesman, Mr. Sabin was made general manager of Mr. Richards's business, and intrusted with the responsible duty of buying, as well as selling, books. He became very popular among the customers of the store, who relied upon the judgment of the young man as an expert, and his judgment was seldom at fault. Among the customers who patronized the store were several who have since become famous, among them Dean Stanley of Westminster, Bishop Wilberforce of Oxford, and afterward of Winchester, who was known in those days as "Soapy Sam," and the Marquis of Blandford, now the Duke of Marlboro, who now has the reputation of being very pious, but who, Mr. Sabin used to say, frightened him in his Oxford days by his terrible profanity. These students and others of their kind were constantly meeting the young man, and from them he learned much of books and authors, while they trusted largely to his judgment in making their purchases and giving their orders for rare books.

During his service with Mr. Richards Mr. Sabin became greatly interested in the subject of temperance. He wrote articles in defense of the cause, and made several public speeches. Even on his death bed he protested against taking the brandy which he overheard his physicians prescribing for him. He remained with Mr. Richards until 1842, when the seven years provided for in his indenture had expired. In the meantime he had prepared several catalogues of libraries for sale, and he fancied that he could do a good business in the auction trade. He had become acquainted with the family of a Mr. Winterborn, an architect and builder in Oxford, and he formed a partnership with one of his sons and began business as a book seller and auctioneer. The business prospered fairly. In 1844 Mr. Sabin was married to Miss Winterborn, the sister of his partner, and in the same year he published his first book, "The Thirty-nine Articles of the Church of England, with Scriptural Proofs and References." The book was published anonymously, because the author thought that if his unknown name was attached to it scholars would take no notice of the work. As it was, the annotations showed great research, and the book was used very extensively by the students at Oxford. Mr. Sabin remained in business in Oxford for four years after the publication of his book, and in the early part of 1848 determined to come to America. Selling his business, he embarked, with his wife and two sons, Joseph and Frank, on the ship West Point, and arrived in New-York on the evening of July 3. He passed a few days in this City, but finding nothing to suit him in the way of employment, he took his family to Philadelphia. Before leaving England Mr. Sabin had purchased a tract of land in Texas, but he learned upon reaching here that it was in much the same condition as Martin Chuzzlewit's Eden investment, and he never went near it.

In Philadelphia Mr. Sabin secured employment in the house of George S. Appleton as a general assistant and salesman, and, buying a farm on Chestnut Hill, within the corporate limits of the city, settled with his family upon it. His knowledge of books and his general acquirements in the business soon opened the eyes of Mr. Appleton to his value, and he employed him in all the details of the business. At that time half binding in calf and morocco was unknown in this country, and Mr. Sabin induced Mr. Appleton to introduce it. It is now a favorite style of binding with publishers. Mr. Sabin remained in Philadelphia but two years. In 1850 he returned to this City and secured an engagement with Cooley & Kees, the book auctioneers, who were doing business at Dey-street and Broadway. He was engaged as a general assistant, his duties being principally to catalogue books to be sold, in which his experience as an expert was very valuable, and occasionally to aid in the sales. Cooley & Kees abandoned the business shortly after, selling out to Lyman & Rawdon, but Mr. Sabin was retained by the new firm. The first important catalogue which he was called upon to make was that of the library of Dr. Samuel Farmer Jarvis, in 1851. The library consisted principally of theological works, and was the finest collection of books which, up to that time, had been sold at auction in this country. To make the catalogue, which was a very complete one, Mr. Sabin was obliged to work a great deal of overtime, and when he presented a bill for this time to his employers they objected to paying it. He was a high-spirited man, and refused to deliver the manuscript to the printer till his bill was paid. The result was that he received his money, but, as an offset, the firm, on the 1st of January, 1852, proposed to reduce his salary. He at once threw up his position, and was engaged at a higher salary by the rival house of Bangs Brothers, No. 13 Park-row. Here he remained for five years, doing cataloguing and miscellaneous work, and, among other things, cataloguing the library of E. B. Corwin, the sale of which first drew attention to the subject of Americana in this country, and gave to Mr. Sabin the idea of the work to which he devoted so many years of his life, the "Dictionary of Books Relating to America from its Discovery to the Present Time."

In 1856 Mr. Sabin started in business for himself in Canal-street, establishing a store for the sale of antique and miscellaneous fine books, but the rage for collection had hardly begun, and after a year of only moderate business he sold out and returned to Philadelphia, where his family were still living. Here, in 1857, he established a store at No. 27 South Sixth-street, and until the breaking out of the war he did a fine business. His customers, however, were principally from the South, to which section the collections of rare books were mostly confined at that time, and with the opening of hostilities his business fell off, and in 1861 he again abandoned Philadelphia and came to New-York. Forming a partnership with H. A. Jennings, under the firm name of J. Sabin & Co., he opened an auction store in Fourth-street. One of his first customers was W. E. Burton, the comedian, whose library, consisting of 6,154 volumes, he catalogued and sold. Business was dull, however, and in 1863 Mr. Sabin retired permanently from the auction business. He bought out the stand of Michael Nunan, No. 84 Nassau-street, and devoted himself to the purchase and sale of rare books and prints. Here he remained until April, 1879, when he retired from active business to give his entire time to the compilation of his dictionary. Since then two of his sons have carried on the business at No. 64 Nassau-street under the firm name of J. Sabin's Sons. Mr. Sabin, during his business career in Nassau-street, became known not only throughout this country, but through Europe, as a bibliophile of great acquirements, and an expert whose judgment in all matters relating to books could be implicitly relied on. He was constantly traveling between this country and Europe, and he made 30 trips across the Atlantic within 20 years. During his business career in Nassau-street he was often called upon to make catalogues. He catalogued the Waltonian library of Dr. Bethune, libraries of John Allen, Andrew Wright, Edwin Forrest, and John E. Wright, and the Menzies collection. The Brinley collection he did not catalogue, that work being done by Mr. Hammond Trumbull, of Hartford, but he conducted the sale of the books, and his skill as an auctioneer, combined with his knowledge of the value of the rare volumes which he offered for sale, made the sale unusually remunerative, over \$100,000 being realized. Mr. Sabin also published for a long time the *American Bibliophile*, and republished a large number of curious old works on American history.

But the great effort of his life, and the work by which he will be longest known to bibliophiles, is his "Dictionary of Books Relating to America from its Discovery to the Present Time." In this work he gives a catalogue of every book, in every language, which relates to, or has the slightest reference to, America. The books are arranged in alphabetical order, and in addition to the title, the substance of the book in its reference to America is given, the number of pages and plates, and the size of the book, with notes by Mr. Sabin, and if the work is very rare the reader is informed where it can be found. This stupendous work was begun in 1856, but the first volume was not published until 1867. But 12 volumes have been completed, and Mr. Sabin was at work on the thirteenth when he died. The 12 volumes bring the catalogue down to the letter N, and embrace descriptions of 52,224 volumes. Mr. Sabin has worked steadily on this dictionary since the idea of producing it first suggested itself to him, and most of the labor had to be done when the majority of people were in bed. He has had the assistance of scholars and librarians to furnish him with the titles of books, and he took every possible means to make the work absolutely complete.

Mr. Sabin will be buried in his late residence to-morrow afternoon at 3 o'clock. Services will be conducted by the Rev. Robert Collyer, and interment will be in Cypress Hills Cemetery.